

Co-chairs of Congressional Delaware River Task Force Say Environmental Impact Studies Must Be Completed First

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Congressman Rush Holt (D-NJ) today sharply criticized the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) for releasing draft regulations to govern hydraulic fracturing without first completing a cumulative water impact study. The members slammed the agency's failure to adequately protect the basin's high quality water resources on, which millions of residents from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania rely on the basin for drinking water and other needs.

Hinchey and Holt, the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Delaware River Task Force, have joined environmentalists, local officials and public citizens in calling for the DRBC to conduct and complete a Cumulative Environmental Impact Study prior to the issuance of its regulatory framework that would allow hydraulic fracturing for natural gas to move forward in the basin. In spite of these calls and pending federal funding for the study as requested by DRBC, the Commission this week issued draft regulations without conducting such an analysis.

"The Delaware River Basin Commission has failed significantly in its mission to protect the tremendously important water resources of the basin. By developing and issuing draft regulations without the completion of comprehensive scientific analysis of the cumulative impacts of hydraulic fracturing, the DRBC has put in jeopardy the River's Special Protection Waters, upon which millions of residents of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania rely for drinking water and other uses.

It should seem obvious that it is impossible to construct a proper regulatory framework without the guidance of the science that these studies would provide. Nevertheless, the commission has moved forward with draft regulations governing natural gas drilling in the Basin without quantifying, examining or understanding the cumulative impacts that such regulations need to mitigate.

We urge the Delaware River Basin Commission to suspend any further action to allow natural gas drilling to move forward until it completes a comprehensive study of the impacts of those activities. Failing to do so undermines the agency's ability to effectively control and minimize the impacts of drilling on our water resources and protect the health of the 15 million people who rely on the Delaware River for clean drinking water and recreation. The DRBC's decision in this matter is highly regrettable and deeply concerning."

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